(b) if so, how many times such extensions have already been given to these officers and the reasons for repeated extensions;

(c) whether Chairman on extension can fulfil the job requirement and objectives;

(d) whether Government are facing shortage of suitable persons for the post of Chairmen of such Corporations; and

(e) if not, the reasons as to why regular appointments are not being made by Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) to (e) The present Chairman and Managing Director (C and MD) of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) and C and MD, Bharat Petroleum Corportion Limited (BPCL) were initially appointed for a period of 5 years or till the date of their superannuation, whichever was earlier. The initial tenure of appointment of Shri H.L. Zutshi, C and MD, HPCL and Shri U. Sundararajan, C and MD, BPCL expired on 21.6.2000 and 3.10.1999 respectively. However, their dates of superannuation being 31.5.2002 and 30.06.2002 respectively, they are elígible for further extension of tenure after the expiry of initial tenure. Such extension of tenure is given after review of their performance. Pending review of his performance. C and MD, HPCL has been given adhoc extension for a period of 3 months beyond 21.6.2000. As regards tenure of C and MD, BPCL pending review of his performance he was given adhoc extension of 3 months beyond 3.10.1999. His tenure has now been extended on regular basis up to the date of his superannuation i.e. 30.6.2002.

Tie-up of Gail and Shell International for Oil Exploration

882. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Gas Authority of India Ltd. had entered into a tie-up with Shell International for oil exploration;

(b) if so, the terms of the agreement; and

(c) the areas where the oil exploration is proposed to be taken up jointly?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) and (b) GAIL and Shell

International Gas Ltd. have signed a document—Principles of Cooperation, which envisages joint evaluation of opportunities in India for exploration and production of hydrocarbons.

(c) The two companies intend to jointly evaluate various Blocks which may be offered by Government under the New Exploration Licensing Policy. It is, therefore, not feasible to indicate the areas of exploration at this stage.

Sale of HSD Defunct Companies

883. SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NAURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) wheter any racket has been unearthed involving sale of high speed diesel in huge quantities to extinct or defunct companies who resold it at high profit in open market; and

(b) if so, whether any collusion between officials of public sector oil companies has been established indicating findings of the inquiries and investigations made therein?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) and (b) Some customers who were obtaining petroleum products on concessional sales tax basis are alleged to have been diverting these products for the purpose other than the intended use thereby evading sales tax. Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered a case in the matter on 23rd May, 2000 at Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

Clearance of applications for LPG Connections in Kerala

884. SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there are more than 8 lakh applications pending in Kerala for fresh LPG connections;

(b) whether it is a fact that he had promised that the backlog of applications upto 31st December, 1999 will be cleared by the end of the year 2000; and

(c) if so, the steps being taken to fulfil this promise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) to (c) Total waiting list registered with LPG distributors of Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies as on 1.12.1999 in Kerala was 8.63 lakhs, and same will be liquidated by end of the calendar year 2000. In the State of Kerala, 2.3 lakhs new LPG connections have been released during the period, January—May, 2000.